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E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/10/2026  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [IZ](#) [UK](#) [JA](#)  
SUBJECT: JAPAN CONSIDERING POST-SAMAWAH OPTIONS IN IRAQ

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Joe Donovan. Reasons: 1.4 (b)(d)  
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-1. (C) Japan is "comfortable" with the UK's intention to complete its withdrawal from Samawah, on a conditional basis, by the end of May, Deputy Vice Foreign Minister Masaharu Kono told the DCM February 10, 2006. Asked about Japan's reaction to the January 23 quadrilateral meeting in London concerning next steps in Iraq, DVFM Kono insisted that Japan had anticipated this UK decision and said MOFA is now studying various options. Because of the many operational aspects involve, the Ground Self-Defense Force (GSDF) is also doing its own "homework," he explained. Kono recalled that the Prime Minister had earlier informed the United States of Japan's political decision to withdraw the GSDF, and had already informed the U.S. that Japan's Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) would remain. Japan is now mulling in what other capacity it might remain in Iraq. He had spoken with FM Aso about Japan's future role in Iraq that same day (February 10). It was too early to discuss the matter, Kono insisted, but he hoped to be able to discuss Japan's plans in concrete terms in the "not too distant future."

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12. (C) Kono explained that he was "not too clear" about the Provincial Reconstruction (PRT) concept because the explanations he had received from the UK and United States were not quite the same. It was his general sense, he stated, that a PRT is intended to help central and local Iraqi authorities with the reconstruction of society and the nation. Actually, that was precisely what the JASDF had been doing for the past two and a half years in Samawah, he suggested. The major difference is that Japan's operation, with 600 personnel, was larger than the 30-40 person PRT teams envisioned for good-governance capacity building. Japan prefers to see exactly what kind of PRTs the United States implements before committing itself. Kono jokingly observed that the UK believes that Al Muthanna province does not need a PRT because of the work that Japan has done there.

13. (C) The PRT concept continues to be developed, the DCM responded, and offered to stay in touch on the matter. The United States can accept a scenario whereby the role of the GSDF would be completed by as early as the end of May and looks forward to the JASDF playing a role in other areas. The U.S. also hopes Japan will seriously consider taking part in a PRT in Basrah or elsewhere. At the conclusion of the meeting, Kono returned to the topic of Iraq to observe that as Japan gets closer to a decision on next steps, the media would likely be filled with a lot of baseless speculation. "Don't be deceived" by the media, he warned. Once a decision is made, the USG would be the first to be informed, Kono underscored.

